

## Rabbis

(O\*NET 27502)

### Significant Points

- Ordination usually requires completion of a college degree followed by a 4- or 5-year program at a Jewish seminary.
- Graduates of Jewish seminaries have excellent job prospects, reflecting current unmet needs for rabbis and the need to replace the many rabbis approaching retirement age.

### Nature of the Work

Rabbis serve Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jewish congregations. Regardless of the branch of Judaism they serve or their individual points of view, all rabbis preserve the substance of Jewish religious worship. Congregations differ in the extent to which they follow the traditional form of worship—for example, in the wearing of head coverings, in the use of Hebrew as the language of prayer, and in the use of instrumental music or a choir. Additionally, the format of the worship service and, therefore, the ritual that the rabbi uses may vary even among congregations belonging to the same branch of Judaism.

Rabbis have greater independence in religious expression than other clergy, because of the absence of a formal religious hierarchy in Judaism. Instead, rabbis are responsible directly to the board of trustees of the congregation they serve. Those serving large congregations may spend considerable time in administrative duties, working with their staffs and committees. Large congregations frequently have associate or assistant rabbis, who often serve as educational directors. All rabbis play a role in community relations. For example, many rabbis serve on committees, alongside business and civic leaders in their communities to help find solutions to local problems.

Rabbis also may write for religious and lay publications and teach in theological seminaries, colleges, and universities.

### Employment

Based on information from organizations representing the 4 major branches of Judaism, there were approximately 1,800 Reform, 1,175 Conservative, 1,800 Orthodox, and 250 Reconstructionist rabbis in 1999. Although the majority served congregations, many rabbis functioned in other settings. Some taught in Jewish studies

programs at colleges and universities, whereas others served as chaplains in hospitals, colleges, or the military. Additionally, some rabbis held positions in one of the many social service or Jewish community agencies.

Although rabbis serve Jewish communities throughout the Nation, they are concentrated in major metropolitan areas with large Jewish populations.

### Training and Other Qualifications

To become eligible for ordination as a rabbi, a student must complete a course of study in a seminary. Entrance requirements and the curriculum depend upon the branch of Judaism with which the seminary is associated. Most seminaries require applicants to be college graduates.

Jewish seminaries typically take 5 years for completion of studies, with an additional preparatory year required for students without sufficient grounding in Hebrew and Jewish studies. In addition to the core academic program, training generally includes fieldwork and internships providing hands-on experience and, in some cases, study in Jerusalem. Seminary graduates are awarded the title Rabbi and earn the Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters degree. After more advanced study, some earn the Doctor of Hebrew Letters degree.

In general, the curricula of Jewish theological seminaries provide students with a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, the Torah, rabbinic literature, Jewish history, Hebrew, theology, and courses in education, pastoral psychology, and public speaking. Students receive extensive practical training in dealing with social problems in the community. Training for alternatives to the pulpit, such as leadership in community services and religious education, is increasingly stressed. Some seminaries grant advanced academic degrees in such fields as biblical and Talmudic research. All Jewish theological seminaries make scholarships and loans available.

Major rabbinical seminaries include the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, which educates rabbis for the Conservative branch; the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, which educates rabbis for the Reform branch; and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, which educates rabbis in the newest branch of Judaism. About 35 seminaries educate and ordain Orthodox rabbis. Although the number of Orthodox seminaries is relatively high, the number of students attending each seminary is low. The Orthodox movement, as a whole, constitutes only about 10 percent of the American Jewish community. The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and the Beth Medrash Govoha Seminary are representative Orthodox seminaries. In all cases, rabbinic training is rigorous. When students have become sufficiently learned in the Torah, the Bible, and other religious texts, they may be ordained with the approval of an authorized rabbi, acting either independently or as a representative of a rabbinical seminary.

Newly ordained rabbis usually begin as spiritual leaders of small congregations, assistants to experienced rabbis, directors of Hillel Foundations on college campuses, teachers in educational institutions, or chaplains in the Armed Forces. As a rule, experienced rabbis fill the pulpits of large, well-established Jewish congregations.

### Job Outlook

Job opportunities for rabbis are expected to be excellent in all four of the major branches of Judaism through the year 2008, reflecting current unmet needs for rabbis, together with the need to replace the many rabbis approaching retirement age. Rabbis willing to work in small, underserved communities should have particularly good prospects.

Graduates of Orthodox seminaries who seek pulpits should have good opportunities as growth in enrollments slows and as many graduates seek alternatives to the pulpit. Reconstructionist rabbis are expected to have very good employment opportunities as membership expands rapidly. Conservative and Reform rabbis are expected to have excellent job opportunities serving congregations or



*Rabbis lead religious services by reading from the Torah, a sacred Jewish text.*

in other settings because job prospects will be numerous in these two largest Jewish movements.

### Earnings

Based on limited information, annual average earnings of rabbis generally ranged from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in 1998, including benefits. Benefits may include housing, health insurance, and a retirement plan. Income varies widely, depending on the size and financial status of the congregation, as well as denominational branch and geographic location. Rabbis may earn additional income from gifts or fees for officiating at ceremonies such as bar or bat mitzvahs and weddings.

### Sources of Additional Information

Persons who are interested in becoming rabbis should discuss with a practicing rabbi their plans for this vocation. Information on the work of rabbis and allied occupations can be obtained from:

- ✦ Rabbinical Council of America, 305 7th Ave., New York, NY 10001. (Orthodox) Internet: <http://www.rabbis.org>
- ✦ The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027. (Conservative) Internet: <http://www.jtsa.edu>
- ✦ Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, One West 4th St., New York, NY 10012. (Reform) Internet: <http://www.huc.edu>
- ✦ Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 1299 Church Rd., Wyncote, PA 19095. (Reconstructionist) Internet: <http://www.rrc.edu>

## Roman Catholic Priests

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### Significant Points

- Preparation generally requires 8 years of study beyond high school, usually including a college degree followed by 4 or more years of theology study at a seminary.
- The shortage of Roman Catholic priests is expected to continue, resulting in a very favorable outlook.

### Nature of the Work

Priests in the Catholic Church belong to one of two groups—diocesan or religious. Both types of priests have the same powers, acquired through ordination by a bishop. Differences lie in their way of life, type of work, and the Church authority to which they are responsible. *Diocesan priests* commit their lives to serving the people of a diocese, a church administrative region, and generally work in parishes assigned by the bishop of their diocese. Diocesan priests take oaths of celibacy and obedience. *Religious priests* belong to a religious order, such as the Jesuits, Dominicans, or Franciscans. In addition to the vows taken by diocesan priests, religious priests take a vow of poverty.

Diocesan priests attend to the spiritual, pastoral, moral, and educational needs of the members of their church. A priest's day usually begins with morning meditation and mass and may end with an individual counseling session or an evening visit to a hospital or home. Many priests direct and serve on church committees, work in civic and charitable organizations, and assist in community projects. Some counsel parishioners preparing for marriage or the birth of a child.

Religious priests receive duty assignments from their superiors in their respective religious orders. Some religious priests specialize in teaching, whereas others serve as missionaries in foreign countries, where they may live under difficult and primitive conditions. Other religious priests live a communal life in monasteries, where they devote their lives to prayer, study, and assigned work.

Both religious and diocesan priests hold teaching and administrative posts in Catholic seminaries, colleges and universities, and



*Roman Catholic priests attend to the spiritual, pastoral, moral, and educational needs of members of their church.*

high schools. Priests attached to religious orders staff many of the Church's institutions of higher education and many high schools, whereas diocesan priests usually are concerned with the parochial schools attached to parish churches and with diocesan high schools. Members of religious orders do much of the missionary work conducted by the Catholic Church in this country and abroad.

### Employment

According to *The Official Catholic Directory*, there were approximately 47,000 priests in 1998; about two-thirds were diocesan priests. There are priests in nearly every city and town and in many rural communities; however, the majority is in metropolitan areas, where most Catholics reside.

### Training and Other Qualifications

Men exclusively are ordained as priests. Women may serve in church positions that do not require priestly ordination. Preparation for the priesthood generally requires 8 years of study beyond high school, usually including a college degree followed by 4 or more years of theology study at a seminary.

Preparatory study for the priesthood may begin in the first year of high school, at the college level, or in theological seminaries after college graduation. Nine high-school seminaries provided a college preparatory program in 1998. Programs emphasize English grammar, speech, literature, and social studies, as well as religious formation. Latin may be required, and modern languages are encouraged. In Hispanic communities, knowledge of Spanish is mandatory.

Those who begin training for the priesthood in college do so in one of 87 priesthood formation programs offered either through Catholic colleges or universities or in freestanding college seminaries. Preparatory studies usually include training in philosophy, religious studies, and prayer.

Today, most candidates for the priesthood have a 4-year degree from an accredited college or university, then attend one of 47 theological seminaries (also called theologates) and earn either the Master of Divinity or the Master of Arts degree. Thirty-five theologates primarily train diocesan priests, whereas 12 theologates mostly educate priests for religious orders. (Slight variations in training reflect the differences in their expected duties.) Theology coursework includes sacred scripture; dogmatic, moral, and pastoral theology; homiletics (art of preaching); Church history; liturgy (sacraments); and canon (church) law. Fieldwork experience usually is required.

Young men are never denied entry into seminaries because of lack of funds. In seminaries for diocesan priests, scholarships or loans are available, and contributions of benefactors and the